Poetry Quarterly

Edited by Wrey Gardiner
at the

Grey Walls Press - Billericay - Essex

Vol. IV, Summer 1942 No. 2

Editorial

As the war drags on towards its fourth year that other war within a war, the bitter animosities and bickering exclusiveness of the intellectuals shows no signs of diminishing in intensity. At first Mr. Lehmann and HORIZON dominated the scene. If you were not approved of by them it would not be possible to publish your work. Now it seems there are additional forces in the battle. Another magazine—KINGDOM COME—has joined the ranks of the few still catering for the growing number of intelligent readers. Mr. Reginald Moore, too, has now become a force in the publishing world with his interesting SELECTED WRITING and MODERN READING. Anthologies disclaiming all suspicion of cliqueishness and anxious to find and help forward the new writer are appearing everywhere. The young now have chances of seeing themselves in print that they would never have had a year ago. This is all to the good. Things are looking brighter. But these figures we have named still tend to become centres of intrigue round which gravitate the warring and anathematising cliques. Like the fascist they are not prepared to acknowledge the existence of other views except in terms of scorn and abuse. We believe these people are doing an important even vital work in sustaining the intellectual morale of the nation. But let them do it with a greater sense of dignity and co-operation rather than in the spirit of ill feeling and narrow uncharitableness of suspicious old ladies.

Rainer Maria Rilke's Cornet

EDITORS' NOTE. As a full translation of R. M. Rilke's Cornet cannot, as announced by The Grey Walls Press, appear owing to the impossibility of obtaining the required licence under the Copyright Act in wartime, the Publishers announce the forthcoming publication of a lengthy study of this work by Stefan Schimanski who, with Leslie Phillips, is responsible for the translation of the passages quoted in that study and the brief note printed below.

Rainer Maria Rilke's *Cornet*, the youthful hero of more than any other established its author's popularity, galloped over the face of the earth in thousands of copies.

It was a strange, uneven little book which Rilke himself at times considered an "intolerable" mixture of prose and poetry—and yet, through these very faults transpires a rare charm and singular beauty, reflecting the naivety of youth and the heat of a single night during which it was written.

The LAY OF LOVE AND DEATH OF CORNET CHRISTOPH RILKE is a symbolic symphony in three movements, rising from a dreary andante into a furious crescendo when Rilke describes in a few words the maddening dance in a village scene:—

A day full of baggage and curses, colours and laughter that drown the whole country. Boistrous boys come running, brawling and bawling. Harlots come winking with purple hats in their flowing hair. Soldiers come irondark as the wandering night, seizing the women with lust and tearing their clothes, pressing them hard against the edge of the drums. And the drums leap to life awakened by violent resistance of passionate hands, and as in a dream they rattle and roll—And at night he is shown strange lanterns, glistening with wine in cages of iron. With wine or with blood?—Who knows the difference?

In contrast to this wild realism rises the sombre dark vision of Cornet's dream:—

The Company camps the far side of the Raab. He from Langenau rides there alone over the plain towards nightfall. The metal adorning his saddle glitters through the dust. And then the moon rises. He can see it on his hands.

He dreams.
But something screams at him.
Screams, screams,
tearing his dreams.
That is no owl. O Mercy,
the only tree
is calling him:
Knight!
And he looks: it struggles. The length of the tree
there trembles a woman,
naked and bleeding,
calling him, pleading: Knight set me free!

And he leaps down into the dark of the green
and severs the burning bonds:
and sees the sparkle in her eyes
and bite in her teeth.

Is she laughing?

He shudders.
And leaps to his horse
and gallops into the night, holding firm
in his fist
the bloodstained cords.

The hero dies in the prime of his life, after a night of love, brandishing his slowly fading flag. Here for the first time the maturing Rilke comes into his own: his Cornet ripens into a great, a personal death which is like "*a feast, a fountain that plays.*"

Later Death will become "a sweet fruit" (The Book of Hours); "the land of reality" (New Poems) and finally the ultimate meaning of life (in the Elegies).

But *Cornet*, though a vital link with Rilke's fundamental conception of death, is still uncertain of his destiny.

"*There is so much strangeness and colour before him—gardens, he thinks, and he smiles.*"

But behind that smile looms the solitude of Worpswede, the vast plains of Russia and the experience of Paris, and from behind that smile rises Rainer Maria Rilke, "the poet of death."

Rainer Maria Rilke

Grave Hours

Translated by Leslie Phillips.

He now weeping out there in the world,
Weeping, not knowing why, in the world,
He weeps for me.

Who now laughs out there in the night,
Laughing, not knowing why, in the night,
He laughs at me.

He now moving out there in the world,
Moving, not knowing why, in the world,
Moves towards me.

Who now dies out there in the world,
Dies, not knowing why, in the world,
He looks at me.

Cold are my Sierras

The plane trees either side of the road, the emptiness and the distance, the high mountains darkening half the sky and somewhere close on one hand the sweep of the sea. In the depths of little white houses men jingled and muttered. But there were few of them. Donkeys trotted on in the dust and the prickly green elephant ears of the cactus hid behind the gaunt, ribbed rocks. Lizards darted away into cracks where the sun beat down drumming in the dusty hollow of the afternoon. Here the white of light and the black of dark were divided as by a knife. Truth was at no pains to rise in white cerements from the grave, was never shrouded in the fine woven tissue of a northern mist.

The little pebbly beach lay sombre and cold in the shadow of the mountain that dwarfed the thoughts of anything within twenty miles. And it was a sacred mountain demanding rites and projecting dark ideas into the mind. Words were hidden in its depths and the wind could only wave the tops of the pines wreathing its gigantic slopes. Climbing it is desperate and tired pains travail in the soul. Unending struggles damp the spirit turning the bent forms of old men into sactifices at dawn. Time throws its shadow over the efforts of the ascetic battling with dreams. Truth is a cold sharp weapon flashing like a lancet among the ulcerous scabs of a conceited world.

The train stood at the platform too long. Fat Spaniards threw a rich garland of words into the pellucid air. But Angelita was enjoying herself talking to them. "How can you go with that bony Englishman?" they said. How contemptible do the thin feel in a world where everyone is fat. In the hotel though is a solitude unequalled by the snow capped sierras. It was a large room with a bathroom attached. And the first thing Angelita did was to have a bath. The

table was covered with leather cases and the impedimenta of travelling. What was this new world to tackle? To be afraid, not to know what to do next in this intimate situation with a foreign girl met in a café only a week or so ago. All these habits uprooted and filled with danger and the unaccustomed.

Angelita came running from the bathroom enveloped in a large bath towel and lay on the clean silk coverlet of the bed rubbing her wet limbs. To help was the instinct. And the ivory body was there underneath like a flower among its leaves. But haste as it must end, quickly, quickly, that it may be done. This distasteful task of sex where love is cold and is only pity for the deserted girl, the dancer dancing with the broken heart. And it is soon over. "Nothing more than skin and bones," she said though more softly, wistfully limpid eyed. "You don't know how to do anything at all." Or want to there where the spirit is dead, beaten and broken in a harsh world, is only pity, pity for the poor dancing girl caught in the stream

The white lights of Madrid fleered and turned to red lettering high in the heated summer evening air. The cafés hummed with soft subdued voices and arm in arm the lovers who were not lovers threaded the throng. Drank horse's blood, the thick red wine of Spain, laughed and danced till the pale dawn over the red roof tops in another room. The Square of the Angel. Angelita in white on the little balcony high over the street and the sound of the carrioca losing itself in the hum of distant traffic. There was an air singing through the dead heart, a sigh of sorrow in the eye of the adventure, life in a world where nothing mattered, no money, no love, no desire, cut off by the dancing gnome shapes of the Pyrenees, nothing but the soft night air and the flaring electric signs and the high heels of the proud in spirit looking out boldly on

a cloud of possibilities. Aping the hard faces of the dead grandees not then unloved by the reproachful stare of a decadent brave people.

"My first love was a bullfighter," she said, "everyone was jealous."

WREY GARDINER.

(*From a new book to be published shortly*).

Henry Treece

Betrayal

I cast the dice and lusting one came up;
My hours of joy were snatched across the board.
I watched the grey hand with its talons creep
Into my childhood, deadly as a sword.

The bone box rattled, fell the grinning cube
And showed upon its side the lying two.
My present, like a dove within my robe,
Fluttered and gave itself to grasping woe.

So once again I shook, and watched the seven
With fearful eyes. I heard the dark shape speak;
"This is an entertainment fit for Heaven;
Finer than rack, or stake, or blinding beak!"

And then he took the cup and flung a three.
A thief was hanging either side of me.

Emanuel Litvinoff

The Unknown Wind

All night I rode the four tempestuous winds
Turning on my canvas bed in search of love,
Love spoke to me in parables of fire
And restless armies dreaming in the plains.

This was deceit, my wild convulsion said,
War was the spear in my side.
Give me my heritage of the sweet lands
The fathers ploughed, give me the intimate
Unshadowed night of wedlock.

I rode the east wind to the restless grave,
Sang sorrow under the sighing willows,
But love was the unremembered dust
Silted at the river mouth.

I rode the south wind to a bright legend
Finding the joyous gods had gone away
And only broken idols in an idle land,
And love was desolate.

Then riding the sharp north wind to frost
I found cold was not purity. Unholy ages
Feeding the termite in the age-long heart
Had passed and love was error.

I rode at last the west wind of discovery
To see time roosting in the unturned field,
A new crop bearing blight from seed unsown,
And love was hopeless.

Now night has gone and left me
Shrunken with violence and pain,
And today I dream of a new wind
Coming.

John Atkins

Sing for the Heretic

Sing for the heretic, he with the eyes
Of lapis-lazuli, the coral hair,
Grown from a thought in the South Pacific,
The childlike trust in the always rare.

Let dogma drag on your thicklined tongue,
And bars of music race your brain;
Here is the tempting vestibule,
The intelligent lie in the daisy chain.

Smell the fumes of the cactus plant,
Pin your ears to the furnace heat,
Within a year or a century
You will find the honey teat.

The broken window shouts its theme
Of larceny and sporting dice,
Wrapped in a hand of flaking clouds,
Crossing the heaven of avarice.

Ian Fletcher

A Love Song of Peter Abailard

On sad and narrow faces
light glances up from meadows.
fingers tired of praying
touch of the purer shadows.

Now the eyes of pictures
beam the quiet meaning,
and the heart assumes
the absolute tinge of morning.

Through the shining meadows
with their coat of paleness,
asking that our hands engraft
every virtuous thing there is;

let us stray and know each other
and our mouths assured of love,
that every growth our sense enjoins
is ecstasy of earth and air.

John Heath-Stubbs

Pavane pour une Infante Defunte

Every evening I saw them go
Down the cold gallery whose smooth dark pavement
Chirped to their shuffling feet—the uncertain feet
Of old women. High overhead
Dangled our unused banners; lapped in folds
Of dusty silk, censorious monstrous-billed
Eagles furling their gold-thread wings,
While, paw-uplifted,
A simpering lion scoured through the velvet field.
Their fingers were ivory-white and ivory-yellow,
Bone-crook'd and looped round by a mumbled rosary.
They passed the long row of sly-winking candles,
Each bowed head in its grotesque eclipse,
Their lips moving ever so little . . . .
We must be quiet now,
Make no sound; only our black silks sweeping
The sycophant floor.
Lay by that lute in the discrete corner,
Its strings untingled by any glozing finger;
We can still twine our roses under the balcony
And leave the casement ajar; but see that it be done
Without fuss; for their must be no sound—
Only that continual bee-like droning
Within the dim chapel, where dry-eyed and cold,
A splendid angel crouches by the new-carved tomb.

Alan Rook

The Wound

When uncovered in the morning
it opens like a rose
and birds blush
at the cherry of lips.

The eyes of the sisters
curiously wander
down the narrow veins
and heart of nard.

Doctors interrupt
curriculum of morning
to liken this polype
the rose of Sharon.

Whilst gay suns shrivel
the petals of the weeks
it pales to cool
whiteness of alabaster,

and as night lies
relieved on the rooftops
to see the white arm of bandages
covering its face,

gently as woman it
reddens in secret
and on the threshold of midnight
terminates a life.

George Woodcock

Poem from London (for H.R.W.)

The fading whistles outline our broken city
Against the dead chart and distant zodiac,
Against the decaying roads, empty and perilous,
That join our exile with the land we seek.

Kissed onward by the pistol, we all are exile,
Expatriate, wandering in the illusive streets
Of faked identity, which swing towards a past
That is no Indies regained by circuitous sea routes.

The bridges are down, the visas are invalid;
We cannot turn on our tracks away from fate.
I stand at the 'phone and listen in to death,
And dare not stuff my ears and ring off hate.

Yet I behold an angel like a falcon
Bearing a speaking flame across the dark
To sing in the dumb streets of cretin children
For the silly hearts that cannot even break.

And under the windows of a drunken pub
A man sits, listening, like a wind-squat tree,
Unnamed, his face a map of paper, his bone hands
Moulding from the burning voice a phoenix day.

Sydney Keyes

To Keep off Fears

Fear of jammed window and of rising footsteps
Out of fear's stair, where a tall phantom mounts
Through time and action at the brain:

Fear of the enormous mountain leaning
Across thought's lake, where blinded fishes move
As cold and intricate as love:

Fear of the fisherman
Who raised Leviathan
On a steel wire from his creative mirror:
Fear of the moonlight shifting against the door:

Fear finally of tripwire and garotte
Reaching possessive from an easy air:
These bring the careful man into despair.

Then let me never crouch against the wall
But meet my fears and fight them till I fall.

Sean Jennet

the News was told

Hearing the grouse call across the moor
their words' warning through the marble day
we climbed the steep rift through the heather,
you and I, the dreamed-of girl and boy:
and in the east the tall guns burned.

The thin clouds flung across the early sky
were veils of cosmic dancers for us then
and the green wind along the level flower
the scarves' draught. Nearer and dearer than
the dead rotting where the front was turned.

And yet we felt even in the marvellous air
the quick glitter of the million blades
and in the wind on the sharp-edged crag
the ache where the torn wound bleeds;
yet dimly, not as the nerves feel

But when we dropped into the smoking valley
and the news was told by the goggle-eyed
the blades were our blades, and the wound
was ours: we were the ones that died
because the old world flared and fell.

Clifford Dyment

Hedgehog in an Air Raid

The sky was a terrific beach
From which the sea had crawled,
Leaving behind lakes of cool pellucid light,
Masses of indigo and sepia cloud,
Wrack strewn and piled, and brilliance
Shooting off the waters
Rippling because of the wind.

I stood on the edge of the beach,
A single watcher in a distance no eye could measure:

And marvelled at the night, its tranquillity,
At the night, its terror—

For the night was tranquil and terrible enough
Without man
Slipping like a shark through the seas,
Pale belly lit by the moon,
Jaw ripe for ripping and blood.

I lifted my eyes to the scene of the beach.
In the huge night alone,
Aghast at the grandeur of the night,
My heart was painful for love of the world—
Horror and joy, frail and strong,
The hill and the supreme bird,
Buildings, people with words on their lips—
For all this of the world I was in pain.

Over the grass a hedgehog came
Questing the air for scents of food
And the cracked twig of danger.
He shuffled near in the gloom. Then stopped.
He was aware of me. I went up,
Bent low to look at him, and saw
His coat of lances pointing to my hand.

What could I do
To show I was no enemy?
I turned him over, inspected his small clenched
paws,

His eyes expressionless as glass,
And did not know how I could speak,
By tongue or touch, the language of a friend.

It was a grief, to be a friend
Yet to be dumb; to offer peace
And bring the soldiers out.

I went aside, stood still to think of a way:
Then soon the hedgehog stirred, lurching off in
haste,
Taking away a friend perhaps,
Taking away a fear
That what seems sweet will poison,
That what seems gentle, pierce.

In the whole of the night, nothing
To heal my sorrow. Only the shark in the skies
To mend my grief.

I offered love, but was not trusted,
I offered peace, but found no language—

I lifted my eyes to the scene of the beach,
Where the shark hunted out in the seas,
Where the light shot off the lakes.

Alex Comfort

Waiting for the Wind

The year turns. Summer blown from Europe
fills skies with grazing islands, throws sickle beaches
flecked with red feathers round uncharted bays

only a day ago I saw a cloud
grey as burnt straw, shaped like an ear of wheat
lie tall across the country, from sky to sky

preceding wind, a banner. Here in England
how we lie silent watching the bowl of sky
how we lie silent waiting for the wind—

millions listening for it, for the clicking of twigs
or the patter of leaves before it, say under their breath
"Now it is bending the spruces northward on Europe

gathering resin and thunder. Yesterday I saw
a hairy cloud, a banner being carried
over the roofs of London, white at midday

but by night a red veil on the sun."
Millions expecting the sudden running of news—
"It has crossed the coast: eastward the dunes are
smoking."

Only a day ago I saw a cloud
feathered like pride, a banner high over Essex
but no lathe stopped to watch it hasten

no flier under it saw the streets
mile upon mile of roaring faces, figures
running into the fields and staring upwards—

light and white as the ash of straws, a banner
shaped like an ear of wheat, full of small breasts
and after it the quick invincible wind.

But still the talk runs, mouth to ear, "the wind
is coming, is crossing the coast." In the fields no noise
as yet, but the starlings telling of weather.

F. Buchanan

The Light Hidden

Alone, unsure in the shade,
Watching the light in a dark wood
Picking its way down a glade,
Opening in a breaking bud
My eye of sight born blind,
Rousing my limbs from the mud
Of a sleeper's black mind;
Yet making way for a wind
From the wood's further density
Where light is left behind,
Hidden without and within me.
—And always has been hidden
Even in the pristine hours
Before the wood was seen;
When in that light I would find
An endless summer of flowers,
And the valley warm and green
In the sunshine and the showers,
And the river sparkling and bright
With the backs of bream darting,
Clustering in the sunlight.
—Proverbs and signs only
In those hours that would deceive
Of what always has been hidden:
Like an unknown stranger standing
Before the prisoner's dock;
Like the clattering prison warder
With the sentence or the reprieve,
Fumbling still at the lock
In the dark of the prison door.

J. F. Hendry

Three Elegies

Standing beside the wind bound
Still as love in a whirl
Wound in a garland of glorious dance
Calm as a wand comes the girl.
Her wild rod of spells in the willow's foot,
All hung upon flowing tears and trance,
Weaves a radiant web among the fruit
From worlds of water crowned.

Down upon downs of their deep sound
Hushed in crystal storm
Distance opening blue veins
Branched with spray her form.
Stripping the opals of the sun, her fire,
Swift as the arrowhead of pain,
She whorls in a cupola of desire
The source of power drowned.

She drinks in the same symbolic spring
Lightning in a kiss,
Profuse as the muscular tree's spell
And blind as the bird's bliss.
Breasting the tides of grief, a caryatid,
She sails upon us like a knell,
Gowned in constellations hid
Where widening eddies ring.

Robert Greacen

Lovers at Evening

From this uneven hill the grey world toppling
Cowers from sloping pricks of rain.
This evening, needles jump on granite crags,
Falling around the line of neck and shoulders
He never knew that she could knit
Her fine-boned scraps of beauty for his sake,
Or eat for him sour, exile grass on Madigan,
So he, prouder than two thousand blazing angels,
Stands in a cool dream and hears loudly
Her emotional tides forcing against his flanks,
While on the green ice of the flat Lough
The sea-gulls pirouette like stumbling twigs:
And he, richer than many-jewelled Indian princes,
Lips the glad wine bursting from heart to vein.
His girl is smiling through the muslin rain,
Who can each moment coin the loving mood again.

John Bayliss

No field . . .

No field of daffodils, no golden willow
in evening quiet out of star-reach
could burnish the memory more than this pillow,
So night winds moving the almond in blossom
your hair quick with beauty, set in relief.

strain the light boughs against lacquer of darkness.
so lies the cypress over a stone
an image of death to trouble this dream.

O keep then this miniature, keep but remember
stars darken, day ends, and the flower of the almond
was picked for a grave: when the grass makes a
pillow
dew falls from the cypress to tarnish bright hair.

Charles Davey

Lullaby

The hand reclines on the strong, luxuriant breast
Brimming at the top of each deep breathing with
Evening grandeur.

Light of Action fades:
On the dark stage the clouds play on entranced in
The measure of their wordless poetry.

The dance of unborn trees with buried leaves
rehung on broken branches ornaments
the rhythm of the sleeping heart-beat.

No moment dies, for time is temporary.

A wave has risen in the sky
To break on hills: a flood of resurrected
summers overspreads the ground; the limbs
fall limp, and the eyes turn to an inward dawn.

Peter Wells

Adam

here stand upon the lip of adam's cave
and gaze into the teeth of the sky.
shattered porcelain upon jade
delicates this my pagan mouth.

for the tongue of adam has strewn
the seed of speech among
the far-daughters, sewn
the hanging lips of the young.

beauty was in the image of flesh
cleaving to the earth, its womb-mate.
the heart was garlanded with the snake;
the head, with a coiled vein.

James H. Kirkup

Nightly the unerring fountains

Nightly the unerring fountains
tilt, mountains bridge
unnatural boundaries.
Nightly the river to the highland yields,
the sea smoulders
on the last unbroken and the head-
lands.

Nightly the lichened violin
blows out into the groom's
dressed unlit hair.
On the destroyed domes
nightly the song-weeds strum,
into the high-pitched midnight,
nightly, the wave spins.

Mabel E. Allan

Unfruitfulness

The inland water laps the weary land,
The throb of the brine-pumps never ceasing,
The hedges still budless and the thin trees bare
And the harsh wind increasing
As night falls on the ploughed, unfruitful earth.

Though it is spring the earth is unawakened,
Heavy, unglowing in the still bright air,
Though blackthorn flings its stars across the hedgerows
And other fields are fair
I see no growth, no promise—this is unfruitful land.

Ashley Sampson

The Confessor

He sees those shadows stealing to and fro
And knows the lesson; but can only guess
The violence or torpor of each heart
And mildew of the uninhabited mind.
His world of shadows never bends or breaks;
And, archetype of spirits, he sits on
From noon to gloam -and gloaming whispers white
That gathering darkness from the world of men.

Ellode Collins

On One Who Died

The gulf of war has swallowed him:
He was a dentist.
Which raises a laugh in the music hall——
——but in reality.
He was a craftsman of the living bone.

Young as they all are young.
Tall and quiet.
Looking towards Saturdays when no mouths
yawned.
Although he is gone—and this thought has an
infinite strangeness.
The small white monuments of his work endure.

Ian Bancroft

Literary History

Troilus in May lies weeping on his bed
Cursing the hours that keep him from his love.
Hears the nightingale moonsinging through his head
And dances daisies round the marble dove.

Langland in May lies speaking on the hills
Viewing the visions that stalk across the grass,
Hears the heavens singing at his heels
And calls to the angels in music as they pass.

Gawaine in May rides on the rock-ribbed moors
Crying to the curlew that circles the grey cloud,
Feels the fells rising, moves the mist hung towers,
And rattles the flint pathway that once the Northmen
trod.

Stefan Schimanski

Rusting Leaves

Once I was flaming flowers
blossoming in fertile fields
came searching fingers
came loving wings
and I was far and free

But soon the scented magic drooped
into the rising mist
wet was the soil
the soul was dry
summer and autumn met

Flowers do not change colour in heaven
love lives not after death
only half-forgotten smiles
and the sound of her laughter
linger on in memories of mistrust

For now I am withering leaves
rusting on barren lands
come languishing moons
come cooling breeze
and carry me away . . . .

A Reply to Mr. Hall

ORDINARILY a man, whatever his degree of emotional or intellectual immaturity, has a right to what he calls his opinion, always provided that he keeps this opinion on a lead and does not allow it to run round biting the legs of the public. This latitude, however, may not be allowed the reviewer, who has a right to no opinion whatever that is not based on education, sensibility and maturity. His beliefs must be well-founded and his criteria tenable, or else his very existence under the name of reviewer becomes farcical, and the space he takes up a wartime crime.

So, I would take Mr. Hall to task for his review of *Ruins and Visions*, in the last number of *Poetry Quarterly*.

He states first of all that "this book contains some of Spender's best lyrics" and "establishes him as the best poet writing in England today."

Very well, Mr. Hall, but please tell us, if you know what the *best* poet looks like, not only what the *best* poetry looks like, but also what *poetry* is.

Then he goes on to say that he does "not mean that Spender's work is consistently *good*, or that no other poet is capable of writing as *well*." Tut! But surely the *best* should be consistent, and if Spender is the *best* poet no other poet should be able to write as well as he?

Now what Mr. Hall admires in Spender "is something quite fundamental, that is the integrity of his attitude towards poetry. Judged by this standard (which standard?) the younger poets (which younger poets?) come off pretty badly." (off what? and how badly?). Surely Mr. Hall, the intention is the same in all real poets, good, bad and indifferent, to write poetry according to their lights. Their integrity, that

is, is everything one could desire. It is a mark of the personality not one of quality, and I have no doubt that Leigh Hunt had it as strongly developed as Hopkins or Milton.

He continues, "there is a tendency for the younger writers, particularly the so-called Apocalyptics, to reject Spender . . ." Now Mr. Hall, do you really speak of "the so-called Preraphaelites," or "the so-called Surrealists," or "so-called Shakespeare?"

"This type of criticism," he says, "is nearly always misdirected, and something more constructive needs to be said." So true, but do, I conjure you, Mr. Hall, set us an example.

But perhaps the direction and construction are here, where he says, "other poets . . . fix upon an idea and dutifully work it to death, like the Apocalyptics." Mr. Hall has apparently not read the two anthologies which the so-called Apocalyptics have so far published, so I will excuse myself for stating very briefly two of the points on which all these poets agree:—

1. That human, including poetic, development must be towards WHOLENESS, and must recognise heart no less than head, the dream—no less than the waking-world.

2. That man has become the victim of mechanisation, and must be freed if his personality is to survive; which freedom may come via Myth, Imagination (in the Coleridge sense), or a personal Religion as opposed to a Mass Creed.

These are not *fixed ideas*, they do not imply *duty*, nor do I discover that the writer of Revelations, Blake, Webster, Marlowe, or Thompson *worked them to death*. All of which points make negative Mr. Hall's discovery that Spender is a "good poet because he is able to bring his whole sensibility, rather than merely his intellect to bear on his poetry."

And finally, Mr. Hall considers Spender a good poet (why not *the best poet*? That's what he believes). "because he does not write too much. In this way he has kept clear of cliques and remained free to adapt and re-inforce the structure of his verse." I really would like to know how Mr. Hall makes up his mind what *too much* or *too little* are. Also, how he comes to know the exact limits of Spender's output. Perhaps he has inside information, or does he have to depend, like the rest of us, on what Spender is able to publish? But in any case, a small output does not keep a poet free of cliques. One poem can go the rounds till it looks like a slim volume (Vide Eliot's *Figlia che piange*, Thomas's *Light Breaks*, and Wordsworth's *Westminster Bridge*.) And, before you make such a barn-door statement in future, Mr. Hall, consider more carefully the nature of cliques (a foolish word among serious people); consider also Spender's relations with the Great Original Clique (Auden-'Spender-Day Lewis), with the Lilliput (Auden-the Listener Clique, and the Horizon Clique. And how does it matter a damn whether a poet *adapts and re-inforces the structure of his verse*? What do the words mean? Surely all poets use the structure that is organic to what they have to say? Or does Mr. Hall believe that matter, manner, form, rhyme-scheme, etc., etc. are separate entities, superimposed on each-other by successive writings?

No, this sort of reviewing just won't do. Mr. Hall can write pleasing little poems—let him stick by them until he has learned to look around a bit. No one takes exception to his championship of Spender, unless it may be Spender, but he should keep it dark until he can do real justice to the object of his worship.

HENRY TREECE.

REVIEWS

Life and the Poet by Stephen Spender (Secker and Warburg, Searchlight Books 2/- net).

Turning aside from mere contemplation of the Waste Land of modern civilization, a new group of poets first drew attention, with *New Signatures* in 1932, to a school of thought which believed in the revivication of society by the achievement of the Communist 'millenium,' and which attempted, not altogether successfully, to identify the cause of the intelligentsia with that of "the workers of the world." In most cases—and it was inevitable from their circumstances—their work was palpably outside the range of proletarian art or thought. The main figures in the movement were W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis and Stephen Spender: later, MacNeice joined 'the school' but he never tramped the Moscow roads very assiduously—he believed too strongly in "The sanctity of the individual will." Sometimes their poetry—with a suitable admixture of Freud—resulted in the "personal esoterics" and private jokes of Auden; at other times in sheer banality of propaganda as when Day Lewis asks, "Why do we all, seeing a Red, feel small?" or in a piece of bad stage juvenilia as in Spender's *Vienna.*

Poets, however, exist as individuals, not as 'schools,' and soon these three pursued their separate ways: Spain—where both Auden and Spender went—and finally the Russian invasion of Finland, did much to disillusion the group about Communism. Auden says practically nothing about it in *Another Time,* but by 1941, in the notes to *A New Year Letter* he explicitly admits that propaganda is not the artist's job. The verse of that book asserts the individualism MacNeice was acclaiming three years before in "An Eclogue from Iceland;" and his philosophy, based now on Kierke-

gaard instead of Marx, has led him to almost identically the position Eliot was in when he wrote *Ash Wednesday*. Day Lewis in *Overtures to Death* (1939) concentrates on the urgent dangers of war, and has ceased to believe there is any longer time for Communism to save us from it. Spender, in whom a sense of tragic pity for humanity was always stronger than in the other two, glimpsed in Spain something of the futility of war, and of a spiritual kinship uniting man with man beyond the division even, of Fascist or Communist: his poem "The Two Armies" in *The Still Centre* (significant title!) should be carefully studied. In *Ruins and Visions* the disillusion over the Civil War is carried a step further, and the author of "The War God," and especially of "June 1940," is very near to the spirit of Wilfred Owen: this is a poetry beyond the '-isms.' It is no surprise, therefore, to find *Life and the Poet*, with generous catholicity of spirit, dedicated to "The Young Writers in the Armed Forces, Civil Defence and the Pacifist Organisations of Democracy: in the hope that this tribute may encourage them to write."

Spender feels that his generation has gone, even if pardonably, hunting after false gods; that, despite the the great temptation, the poet should never become the political pampleteer: "Those concerned with ends should not renounce them and become entirely preoccupied with means." And at once we see that *Life and the Poet* implies a clear differentiation of ends and means or, more exactly, that it stresses a right order of life values: and therein lies its significance. Spender tries to establish a golden mean between socio-political exhortation, whether as a Left Wing intellectual or a 'war poet,' and the splendid isolation of the ego-centrics: "There is a third way of looking at the problem besides those two sinister alternatives, the armoured tank and the ivory tower;" but he knows the way is not easy. The poet must not ride the

hobby-horse of politics or economics; yet he is an incomplete, a less vital personality—and therefore less even of a *potential* poet—if he does not show himself aware of the contemporary scene. And as great an artist as Thomas Mann declares that all our problems now are seen in political terms; while contemporary 'economic man' cannot shut his eyes, even if he would, to the economic adjustments necessary in the present and immediate future, if he is to survive at all. Yet it remains true that poetry should not invoke political action, for that, says Spender, "is to put poetry at the mercy of something outside the poetry which has to happen in order that the poem may be fulfilled." That, then, is the poet's—and all artists'—dilemma, and it is finely presented here by the author with sincerity and personal conviction, and often without sparing himself where he feels he has, in the past, been wrong.

How far, however, does he go towards affording a solution: what is positive in this book? Perhaps the simplest answer is to give a series of quotations, offering certain 'touchstones' in the contemporary morass: more than that Spender does not claim to do:

> "It is all the more important that the "happy few" who uphold values of art, poetry, science should state as clearly as possible what the function of these values in life is, in order that new social patterns may grow around such an understanding."

This is to give poetry the dignity once more of a semi-religious experience; and elsewhere he explicitly affirms this

> "Poetry, I claim, is the attempt to imagine in terms of the transitory forms of the present in which a generation lives, the universal nature of man's being . . . . The greatest modern poet would be the poet most capable of accepting the most anti-poetic and brutal phenomena—war, slums, tyrannies—and revealing them as the expression of man's spirit even in being denials of man's spirit" (c.f.

Wilfred Owen and Eliot; and is not this that "Negative Capability" Keats praised in Shakespeare: "The chameleon poet takes as great a delight in creating an Iago as an Imogen;" and Keats's own aspiration towards "The love of good and ill"?)

We must accept the implications of the contemporary scene; but through it, and beyond it, we must perceive the universal and the eternal: and the two must not be confused:—

> "The habit of keeping experiences distinct, constantly weighing and examining them, not living life at second hand either through one's neighbour's eyes or through the deadening accumulation of past reactions to experience—and at the same time not losing the past experience nor the sense of what the neighbours say—is largely a matter of devotion, self-discipline and the technique of living: it is a gift that can, nevertheless be developed." (With the end of which compare "What the Thunder Said." Pt. V. *The Waste Land.*)

But, Spender confesses,

> "Our dreams are violent and confused, and all we can do is to remain true to our dreams."

And looking round for an example of a poet, or more specifically, of the kind of poets and poetry that are endeavouring to do this today, he selects the apocalyptic verse of Dylan Thomas. Eliot and his generation pitilessly analysed the ghastly Waste Land of our civilization; Auden and his friends endeavoured "to tidy up," as MacNeice said, "those fragments that Mr. Eliot had shored against his ruins," and Communistically rebuild the world; Thomas and his contemporaries, says Spender,

"accept The Waste Land as the background of their lives and allow its rubbish and its plants to sprout through their poetry. Their attitude seems to say, 'Perhaps this is rubbish, perhaps not. Anyhow, let it grow into our lives and perhaps it will put forth the shoots of a new life.' This is the poetry of being rather than of thinking and of knowing."

Not all Apocalyptic poets are as tentative as that (cf. Treece; Nicholas Moore) nor are they, it must be admitted, all as immediately evocative as in the Thomas poem quoted here; in fact, perhaps their greatest danger is that, in shunning the Red flag and 'the armoured tank' they may, in spite of themselves, find they are in a brand new, 1942 Ivory Tower. But the dangers or abuses of a movement are never a reason for condemning the movement itself, and the Apocalyptics are on the right track: it is Spender's distinction, both here and in some of his recent verse, to be the first poet of a slightly older generation both to perceive and to welcome that fact.

H. PESCHMANN.

A Choice of Kipling's Verse, with an essay by T. S. Eliot, Faber and Faber 8/6d.

The Collected Poems of Walter De la Mare, Faber and Faber 12/6d.

Mr. Eliot's long and entertaining introduction to his selection from the verse of Kipling—it runs to over ten thousand words—will interest many readers who have watched with fascinated attention the evolution during recent years of a powerful and critical mind from one point of view to another.

The inconoclast of The Waste Land has now become the High Priest of the Temple. There is a certain

irony in the thought, but one reader at least is grateful for a new valuation of Kipling's verse and delighted with a closely argued and altogether attractive essay in defence of the theme that in speaking of Kipling's work we are entitled to say that it is "great verse." Mr. Eliot can think of a number of poets who have written great poetry, only of a very few whom he would call great verse writers. Dryden is perhaps the greatest of all. Whilst praising Kipling as a maker of good ballads Mr. Eliot also acknowledges the excellence of much of his occasional verse and his success in the difficult forms of the epigram and the hymn. Another quality which Mr. Eliot finds in Kipling is that of craftsmanship, he nearly always succeeds in doing what he sets out to do.

It is good to study the reactions of so acute a mind as that of Mr. Eliot, but for myself I find to revisit Kipling is to confirm an earlier judgment. Among much that is jarring and cheap are to be found some poems of great charm, variety and power. These include *V.A.D. Mediterranean, Cities and Thrones and Powers, Puck's Song, The Way Through the Wood, A Charm, The Bridegroom, The Children's Song, The Queen's Men,* and *Recessional.* I observe that most of these are poems from books. Kipling has been lauded as the poet of Empire and as such his verse is at times stridently expressed. But his love of England and of English ways is a true passion, deep and lasting. It is not a small thing in the hour of England's peril to remember with honour the name of her great son.

Forty years ago a little book, *Songs of Childhood,* the first publication of Walter De la Mare, appeared over the pseudonym of Walter Ramal. It showed beyond all cavil that a new and considerable poet had arrived. Since that time a steady succession of books has added to his reputation as a poet. His range is not extensive but within its own bounds a subtle, sometimes strange, and frequently lovely music, fresh

and clear, may be heard. The collections of Mr. De la Mare's poetry published in 1920 and 1934 are now out of print. This new collected edition, the publishers tell us, includes all the poems in previous collections and since published separately, with the exception—a considerable one—of the poems for children, which will appear in another book later.

There is a new vision and utterance in many of the lyrics of De la Mare quite unlike anything else now being written. These poems are not in the current of the time but ageless in their appeal. This wistful voice strikes upon the ear with a lonely beauty as in the poem *Vain Questioning* surely one of the most haunting in English verse—

> Oh! foolish one to roam
> So far in thine own mind away from home.

Something of the dewy fragrance of an English meadow in spring, sweet with wild flowers, is about many of these poems, others have a deeper, more intense note of pain or regret, but all are possessed by the glamour of the poet's almost uncanny artistry and evocative charm. Listen to the immemorial music of a very early poem *Winter*, highly praised to me many years ago by my friend, the late John Bailey, and which, recognised, again fills me with the old delight:

> Clouded with snow
> The bleak winds blow,
> And shrill on leafless bough
> The robin with its burning breast
> Alone sings now.
>
> The rayless sun,
> Day's journey done,
> Sheds its last ebbing light
> On fields in leagues of beauty spread
> Unearthly white.

Thick draws the dark,
And spark by spark,
The frost fires kindle, and soon
Over that sea of frozen foam
Floats the white moon.

This poet is sure of his ultimate reward and one may be grateful for his evocative and consoling verse in an ugly and twisted time.

SAMUEL J. LOOKER.

Invitation and Warning, by Henry Treece (*Faber* 6/-).

All action can be measured by reaction, someone once said. In this book we have the inevitable reaction against the Functionalists of the thirties. Treece, one of the leaders of the Apocalyptic school, has never had any sympathies with pylonism; he has been a consistant admirer of Thomas—and even wrote a monograph on him three or four years ago, when his collected works numbered about twenty five poems. It is not surprising then that the verse style and occasionally the thought of these two men have certain affinities; but Treece is no imitator; he has used Thomas as a base-camp rather than an objective.

He is a true romantic, with the old attitude of isolation and outlawry. The prefatory poem, *Pilgrim*, is typical—

"I step from a land no eye has seen
To a land no hand may ever hold."

His symbolic background is bare and grey, scattered with thorns and gaunt crosses, though it can be suddenly transfigured by gleams of gold and crimson. But he is no escapist; throughout his poetry there runs a deep, rarely bitter, awareness of the modern tragedy ("slow sarabande of pain in all the air"). Parallel with this is his search for a faith, a stable myth, which, found, reveals itself in the plangency of—

"The knife that purifies the heart
Leaves soldier bleaching on the sand;
And rains that rot the future's bread
Make sweet the gardens of the mind."

Against disintegration and despair he sets a fearless search for "the wide immeasurable knowledge of an end." He sees that the poet's quest and conflict must finish in inevitable failure. The recurring duality —poet and beggar, man of God—can only be resolved in destruction, a self-annihilating success—

"The wings of wisdom warned me; many times
Harsh blows upon my heart bade me begone.
Yet thrust I sunward till at close of eve
I saw my father—nailed across the world."

Nor is it only in content that Treece moves away from the aridity of the thirties. His rhythms are (or seem to be) based on old ballad forms, or even on the old alliterative measure, with frequent variations of stress. There are many half-rhymes or assonances, and much alliteration. Occasionally his hunger for melody leads to a surfeit—it is difficult to see how so polished a craftsman could permit this to stand—

"That pock-patched bitter brother whose is right
To shelter in my shroud, my final friend."

But usually his fresh use of words and picturesque imagery is vastly stimulating, as, for example, in the *Ballad of the Ranting Lad* and *Legend*.

He stands with Watkins as a new poet of originality and possible greatness, but he has pruned away Watkins' unnecessary accretions—he does not shout so much. The first of the four sections of the book, *Mystic Numbers*, is the most satisfying, because the most universal. The two sequences which follow are interesting and experimental rather than final and inevitable. *The Boat Returns* is virtually perfect in technique, but the allegory is at times a trifle confusing. Perhaps the best feature of this book is the sign it gives that poetry is moving towards a fusion

of its two great elements, truth and beauty, a synthesis of the poetic ideal which has not been achieved since the early years of last century. If, on the one hand, Treece and Watkins follow Alun Lewis, and, on the other, Auden and Day Lewis follow MacNeice, on a centripetal course, great results must be gained.

Buy this book, it's important.

IAN BANCROFT.

The Fortune Anthology, Fortune Press 6/-.

Here is a practical example of what is advocated in our editorial. The Editors aim at including all extremes in their anthology, the old, the young, soldiers, C.O.s, Catholics and atheists. If they have succeeded the result should give us a greater wholeness of vision than we are accustomed to from the pundits of Grub Street. It is an interestingly varied if unequal book in which the American contributors, practised hands like Conrad Aiken and Henry Miller come off best and serve rather to dwarf some of the less mature work in it. But it is interesting and well worth its price and the editors must be congratulated on their courage in attempting to break away from the deadening hand of the cliques. WREY GARDINER.

THE

WIND AND THE RAIN

SUMMER, 1942

PRESENTS

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Brief Reviews

The Island and the Cattle (*Nicholas Moore*) *Fortune* 6/-.
The Men of the Rocks (*Adam Drinan*) *Fortune* 5/-.
Battlefields and Girls (*David Martin*) *Maclellan, Glasgow* 9*d*.
Selected Poems (*Harold Monro*) *Faber* 2/6*d*.
32 *Poems* (*Kenneth Gee*) *Fortune* 6/-

I dislike the fashion among newspaper—and other—critics of classifying poets by their attitude to current events. But on these lines the present batch make interesting comparison. Moore is the best known of them, and though I admire his work, I feel that he has temporarily overrun his inspiration, possibly by publishing too much. Apart from some very astute satire, the only poem in this book which is comparable with the really moving work in "A Wish in Season" is the name-poem. Much of the imagery is chaotic or private or both. But there is no poem which has not some really remarkable line in it, and one feels that the ensemble, collected from very early as well as recent work, cannot disguise Moore's talent in spite of a suggestion that the ideas are not fully worked out. In Moore we have a picture of the bitterness of the intellectual man against the war. Drinan, although some of his style is not unlike early Moore, and often similar also to Fraser's, is bitter for a different reason. This is a very competent poem, descriptively and in its idea. It exudes boding discontent. How far Drinan's Highland grudge against England is real, and how far it is a part of a formal device, one cannot estimate. Although the form is regional, the fear is almost international—the apprehension of the imminent swindle, which bulks so large below the surface of modern political writing. Drinan sees the laird at one with the invader, and a new Bordeaux in the Great Glen.

Martin's poetry is unlike anything I have read from recent years. It is shapeless, technically simple, and manages to carry a kind of conviction which has been missing for a long while. The term people's poetry has been overworked and abused, but this verse deserves it in that the people will sing poems of this kind. Martin is not content to be a passionate supporter of, and believer in, the war. He has seen three anti-Fascist wars, and writes out of conviction. The only writer with whom one can usefully compare him is Ernest Charles Jones. His verses are like fists. I do not agree that sincerity makes art, but Martin's poems are good art in the sense that he was forced by his and outer circumstances to write them. At a time when there are so few good revolutionary poets he may well be a precursor of others.

The book of Monro's work shows just how far Monro himself managed to transcend Georgianism. Many of the poems twitter, and there is a facile springiness about all of them that makes one uneasy. But Monro was no fool, and there are some of his poems which certainly ought to survive the century. Current artistic problems overshadow them, but a revelation of origins—and these poems are such—is never irrelevant.

Gee's book is quite good, especially towards the end. It shows development from a Spenderian pastiche into a sensitive if cold classicism suggesting some of Paul Nash's decors—cloud beaches littered with enormous dead spines, and so on. Even where its interpretation fails, his phrases are happy—the crocus "like an incendiary fin." Typical of a good deal of recent verse, but worth publishing.

ALEX COMFORT.

POETRY QUARTERLY

Edited by WREY GARDINER.

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